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## ON ZEMES FROM CATAMARCA, ARGENTINE REPUBLIC.

BY SAMUEL A. LAFONE QUEVEDO.

Mr. Fewkes' paper on Zemes in the April number of the *AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST* has suggested the following notes :

In 1886 I obtained a small object in white stone, Fig. 1, which I at once suspected to be some form of *Guacancuillo* or amulet. I had already secured some three or four specimens like that in Fig. 2, which are called *Guacancuillu* by the learned in such lore.

The word *guacancuillo* is but a diminutive of the Quichua *huacanki*, certain herbs or stones which are said by the Indians to be love-charms (Voc. by von Tschudi). The word *huaca* itself is used to designate stones of many colors, or indeed anything rare or strange.

How far these charms were produced by those who used them is a question not so easily solved. I rather incline to the belief that they were the work of pre-Columbian races, discovered in pots and graves of the older tribes and looked upon as lucky stones by those who found them.

Medina in his "Aborígenes de Chile" illustrates one of these emblems (Figure 99). He ascribes it to the Chango Indians, and says they probably used it in making their nets, Fig 3.

One thing is quite evident, that the end nicks seem to be correlated with those on Fig. 1, and its shape to reproduce Fig. 2.

The most natural hypothesis is that they are all three *zemes*, and of very considerable antiquity ; probably the work of those nations which were overthrown by the barbarous hordes spoken of by Montesinos. They seem to have begun their incursions about 500 years before our era, and to have continued them for more or less 1,000 years.

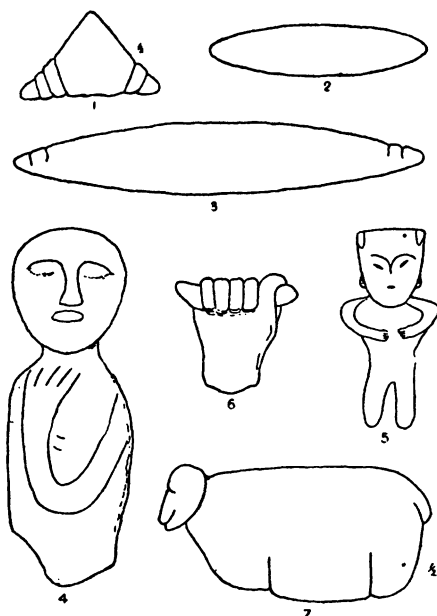
If we compare these tracings with the cuts in Mr. Fewkes' paper, we cannot help being struck with the resemblance. Moreover, my linguistic investigations lead me to the belief that the Caribbee element is very strong in all the chief South American nations.

Wooden *huacas* or *zemes* are very scarce in our region, and for obvious reasons: the wood of the *algarrobo* tree, the *tacu* of the natives and *Prosopis dulcis* of botanists, soon decays. A dry rot

sets in which destroys all this wood when once submitted to the action of the soil. I have, however, secured one specimen, which was found in a very beautiful coffin-jar near Santa Maria, in the Calchaqui region.

This little *zeme* is given in natural size, and is carved in low relief, but not badly. Fig. 4.

Idols in clay are very numerous, but I should be exceeding the bounds of this paper were I to give an account of this part of my collection. Fig. 5 represents one of these little idols 16 cent. high. The color is pinkish. The ears are pierced, probably to carry little pins.



When we remember how the missionaries secured and destroyed all these superstitious symbols, it is surprising that so many have survived.

But stranger than all is the little hand-*zeme*, Fig. 6, one of many found in this region. A very curious incident is connected with this specimen which I shall proceed to relate:

It was found in Pilciao, near Andalgola, as far back as 1861, and given to me then. At that time a Frenchman from Mazatlan asked

me for and obtained employment in our works. One day, as he was showing me some Mexican curiosities, out came a little hand carved in white stone, the very counterpart of mine. I at once proceeded to claim it, and it ended in our making a wager which I lost; for, on going to the drawer in which I kept such treasures, there I found my little hand safe enough.

I have possessed two or more similar specimens, and there are others in the La Plata Museum, all from this region. It would be well worth while to inquire whether my Frenchman's was the only specimen known in the north.

Seeing that the prey-gods of the Zúñis are so often to be met with here, why should we be surprised to find *zemes* as well.

Fig. 7 is a drawing of one of these prey-gods in a sort of jade or soapstone. It was found near Pomair.

To say it is something like a sheep would imply that it belonged to the time of the Spanish dominion; but as it happens, I have another like a camel, and where could this come from? They must be the work of men who brought them from the land where sheep, camels, etc., were. They must have been buried, lost and again found to serve as *zemes* or charms.

Unfortunately the earliest volume which I possess of the Smithsonian Institution's publications only goes as far back as 1879, therefore I cannot compare mine with Mr. Mason's drawings, but I think I have said enough to attract the attention of Mr. Fewkes and other students in this branch to the importance of Catamarca as a field for investigation. *Zemes*, huacas, prey-gods, charms, etc., are frequently to be met with, and must have much to tell us of the old people who once inhabited both halves of our continent.